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A

LETTER

ADDRESSED TO

THE HONEST REFORMERS

OF

SCOTLAND;

WITH REMARKS ON THE

POOR RATES, CORN LAW, RELIGIOUS ESTABLISHMENT,

RIGHT OF PROPERTY,

EQUALITY OF RANKS, AND REVOLUTION.

“The wicked walk on every side, when the vilest men are exalted.”

Psal. xii. 8.

“For I know this, that grievous wolves shall enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.” *Acts xx. 29.*

GLASGOW:

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OGLE, AND CHALMERS AND COLLINS; G. CUTHBERTSON, PAISLEY;
W. WATSON, AND W. SCOTT, GREENOCK; AND BY ALL THE OTHER
BOOKSELLERS IN THE WEST OF SCOTLAND.

1819.

1 Cap. 181. 1712.

INTRODUCTION.

THE way in which Reform has been recommended, and the violence by which it has been argued in the streets, has decided me to disclaim it. Until the people, and capital by which they subsist, are united in purification of Parliament, no man, who has not made up his mind to revolution, can meddle with it. Astonishing as it may appear, that any man should seek for power, by brutalizing those who are stupid or ignorant, it is nevertheless too true. Every atrocious feeling is carefully raised, by the phosphoric light, in which every act of Administration, every movement of the proprietor is shewn. Parliament may be too aristocratic, Ministers too lavish, Opposition too factious; but the honesty, talent, and patriotism of all of them, is obviously superior to the class of the nation which abuses them. At all events, the property, and the monied interest, and the religious body of the state, and seven-eighths of the people, will support them in taxes to any extent, against the deluded mob. To keep up popular feeling, to prevent despotism, and to expose revolution, is the motive and apology for this hasty compilation.

I lately published my opinion as to the causes of the present distress, in the following Letter to the Editor of a Newspaper :—

SIR,

In your columns, which I have found ever advocating the cause of that class, whose means of existence is now often precarious, and consequently, doubly liable to be affected by the mistakes of an administration, too much influenced by the artificial interests of commercial and manufacturing wealth, employed in a foreign and unstable commerce, I wish the following observations to be inserted.

Since the period that the French over-ran Italy and Germany, the commercial relations of Europe, and the capital of all its wealthy classes, have been displaced and thrown into new channels. In the embarrassment which has ensued, money has been the only riches, and its interest, when lent to Government, the only income it produced, even under all the paper depreciation by which it has been liquidated. Capitalists submitted to this until the periodical irruptions of the French rendered all Governments bankrupt, and all security of property impracticable. Great Britain, an island under a representative Government, and of inviolable integrity, after a war of some duration, acquired the confidence of all the capitalists of Europe (not excepting even the French), and very soon, in its funds, their wealth. Industrious, moral, and brave, her skill, valour, and good faith, retained the high opinion, at home and abroad, which she had attained by honesty in trade, and invincible courage in war; while the talents of her leaders, by land and sea, opened to the enterprise of her merchant, and the skill of her manufacturer, a field, to plant the productions of her own industry, and transport those of others into that which had no limits but the waves of the ocean. A long war, under these circumstances, created a new population, and the progressive improvement in the mechanical skill. The able artizanship, and the accumulation of trading capital, kept pace with the augmentation of demand, which the want of these qualities, and improvements, and means of engaging in business, in the Continental States, constantly created in Great Britain. The effect of this immense capital was to cultivate the kingdom like a garden, and by the instrumentality of operatives of every class and description of manufactures, to bring waste grounds into a state of most beneficial production. The same cause which benefited the whole empire, contributed, by the taxes it produced, to maintain the war and defend the country; but that cause too, intoxicated both the Minister and the Manufacturer, and the one by his extravagance in private life, and the other in public affairs, evinced it. When I select these two characters, it is because

they are the most apt for my illustration; for the delirium of the Briton was neither confined to cast nor tribe. A great statesman did not escape the temporary madness; for it was avowed that a state of war was the best, where a doctrine so false and so unchristian ought not to be entertained, and was even disgraceful in the avowal. Under the words “revulsion” and the “level of trade,” are contained the wisdom of middle ages, and the elements of political economy; but no ideas which embrace or can represent positive or accurate practical lessons to the statesman, the manufacturer, the merchant, the landowner, and, above all, the weaver, how distinct soever they may be to the superficial, the indolent, and the unfeeling. I will not employ such terms; but proceed to show what produces the distress of the times, in my opinion, principally for the instruction of the sensible, the virtuous, and the suffering operative:—

A revival and renewal of the ancient commerce of different countries; a removal of the capital of foreigners to its natural place; a pauper unproductive population, in parts, fed by foreign labour, in those very countries, to which our trade and capital has returned;) *and taxes to pay those whose loans saved us from slavery.* Now, Sir, here are, I think, three causes, each of which might have created distress in full and vigorous operation—quite independent of the taxes, and the want of Annual Parliaments, or Universal Suffrage; and which the “level of trade,” nor the “revulsion,” nor “want of Hunts,” &c. &c. in the House of Commons, can neither explain, neutralize, obviate, nor cure. Speculation attempts to crush the manufacturing establishments on the Continent, and the conversion of that capital into trade, which had been wasted in war, for a time gave a market to our operatives; but it was only an alleviation, not a remedy for the palsy, which began in plethora, and must end in apoplexy, unless some means are taken to relieve the country of that determination to weaving, &c. and to withdraw that redundancy of industry which originated in a peculiar war, and could only be subsisted by such peculiarity. Young men should leave the loom,

children should be deterred from it, and, under the auspices of Government, rivers should be embanked, land drained, roads and canals commenced, and waste lands cultivated, in the neighbourhood not only of the manufacturing districts, but over the whole empire. The Clyde, Solway, &c. would amply and quickly repay the State, but require the care and capital of the State to embank them. Can any Government be more politically, more prudently, or more nobly occupied, than in such an undertaking? and would it not be wiser to grow corn here than import it? When no burdens can be imposed on such soil, and when our people are worthy, intelligent, and industrious, it would, perhaps, both be more lucrative in the end, and more decorous, and more economical in the beginning, to employ than to transport a formed industry, which elsewhere must come against us. But the State alone, which is every other class, is not alone called to make new and unusual exertions, but the operative also—he must prepare to engage in harder work and lower wages; and take measures to prevent such dreadful effects again; and he too, must neither tell that State that he disowns it, nor prove his words by plundering and destroying the property of his neighbour. *Because, if he denies that those who govern and make laws for him have a right to do so, he denies, too, their power to relieve him, and by destructive acts he warrants the hand of power to destroy him.* Revival of apprenticeships, not increase of members of parliament, will relieve his wants; for he may increase his representatives without correcting, and augment his voters without purifying them; but he can put obstacles in the way of those children, nephews, and friends, whose distaste to field labour may huddle them into a business which will distress him, and make themselves poor and discontented, and at the mercy of a declaration of war by almost any nation in Europe. If he has his trade confined to good hands, it will perhaps command a market, when foreign goods have no sale; at all events, he will have a greater chance of escaping those sudden stagnations which arise from the rashness of speculators, and the too great facility of forcing a trade, which the vast quantity of hands holds out to the gam-

bling trader and manufacturer, in his competition with the sound, wealthy, honest man of business.

If a weaver cannot clothe himself decently, give something on a Sunday to the poor's plate, and educate his children, his business is overstocked—his utility to the State trifling, his subsistence likely to become burdensome to his parish, his neighbours, and his friends : the temporary gain of teaching his own children his trade, and setting them to work for him, is liable to be followed by long distress of mind, when he sees them unable to live by the profession he instructed them in, perhaps rioters, robbers, &c.

The disgraceful results of the Paisley meeting may prove all these opinions ; and he may be assured that, when his opinions of reform are totally different from those of almost all the property and nine-tenths of the people of Great Britain, the Sovereign and Minister will quickly crush its operation, if it leads to violence and plunder. No reform was ever carried by the minority, and the efforts of men who use violence must soon withdraw the protection of what are called the Whigs, and those who feel for him, and check, for a long time, even that restoration of the Constitution which is prayed for by

A RENFREWSHIRE REFORMER.

LETTER,

&c.

MYSELF a Reformer, who wished neither to be without God nor law in the world, I have been deeply grieved to find, by the recent meetings in Glasgow and Paisley, that I have been engaged in a cause that has for its object to destroy authority, divide property, and do away with religion. A private grief should be kept to our own bosom, but a public one made known; for although tears may relieve ourselves, they cannot save our country. Virtuous sentiments for our neighbour, and gratitude to God, do not benefit here, but by open exhibition; and cannot be admired or imitated, but when seen and felt in active operation. How much more are the feelings of patriotism questionable when unheard, unseen, or undescribed; how obvious are they to the doubt and derision of those who have them not, and envy and malign them in others. Such, at least, many admit to be the probable evils of a silent retirement from our cause, or a tame, a timid acquiescence in what we do not approve; and the very suspicion of fear or dishonesty is what no man of

heart or head will submit to, and I am unable and unwilling to bear.

What ! is the spirit of independence to be rooted out, is obedience to the constitution to be foresworn, is honesty to be rejected, and the Creator and Preserver of mankind, in whom we live, and breathe, and have our being, to be neglected ; that the beggar, the robber, the thief, and the atheist, may degrade the industrious, plunder the feeble, defraud the innocent, and revile God ? Is morality here, and the recompense of it hereafter, to be exploded and contemned ? Is there to be no sanctity in an oath, no merit in justice, no consolation for misfortune, no shield from outrage, no "peace that the world cannot give," to be left us in a life full of vicissitude and pain, and for a sick-bed of fearful inquietude ? Ah ! my friends, let us all examine well the lives and characters of those who preach such doctrines ; let us hesitate in an association that abuses every thing it envies, vilifies every thing in power and above itself, and tells us, that vice and virtue are names, and have no reward but in our own foolish opinion and feeling.

What ! is the beautiful fabric which enjoins us to live and die for our country, and the purifying mind, that teaches us to love our neighbour as ourselves, to be thrown into the sink of squalid poverty and vile profligacy, from which we are to fish out toads and lizards to guide and rule us ? What ! is that ray of light, which, on the death-bed of the upright man, on the couch of the dying patriot, on the wreck of the brave sailor, on the bleeding plaid of the gallant soldier, lightens them to the celestial heights of justice and reward, to be obscured by the

foggy and pestilential vapours of the abandoned; what! are virtuous and heroic deeds to hope for no approbation, but that of an ignorant, a jealous prince, a fickle, unheeding, and ungrateful people? God forbid, that we who wish to improve our ministers, purify our House of Commons, and amend our churchmen, should unite our honest intentions, to these new and iniquitous designs: those who wish anarchy here, and annihilation hereafter, must desire to act in a manner that God forbids, and society cannot permit.

If God is pure, good, just; impurity, badness, and injustice, must be offensive to him; if law is to defend the feeble against the strong, to protect the poor from the rich, to support the innocent against the guilty, to maintain the weak against the powerful, and, above all, to save the subject from the folly or oppression of his rulers;—what objection can a wise or a well meaning person have to such supremacies?

If the constitution can allow freedom of opinion, expressed or written; can secure property; give every man's ambition all but the crown; admit perfect toleration; open its senate, its courts of law, its equal rights to all classes and every rank; what imports it whether it be administered by a republic or a limited king, whether a commoner or a nobleman fills the prime ministry? Very little, I suppose, in the nature of its operation in theory, and if any thing in practice, it must be favourable to the existing order of things.

A man, who has high rank, great wealth, and a good character, has surely less inducement to plunder, to act unjustly, or to be vicious, than a needy

demagogue, without reputation; indeed, if alike in every moral quality, surely the man of property has more to lose, if, in addition to his own respect, he sacrifices the name of an ancient and venerated house. No kind, honest, sensible man, of good and of industrious habits, can wish to bear false witness against, or rob of his wife's affection, his neighbour, or rather his friend; to steal, to rob, or to murder his acquaintance; to enforce his opinions by brutal violence, to deprive others of the means bravely, honestly, or laboriously acquired, for rearing a family, and maintaining the feebleness and grey hairs of old age; or to gain by a beggary, or poor rate, his livelihood, out of the means or labour of another.

It is not the mean, the idle, the gloomy spirit which that bounty on propagation creates, that is alone to be dreaded and deprecated, but the wretched state to which it reduces the whole productive labour of the empire. Any thing which increases the population, without augmenting its capital, is hurtful to the nation, and ruinous to the workman; because it gives the wages which should belong to one man's labour to that of two, or the wages of two men's labour to three, &c. The poor's rate is a sum levied on the landowner, farmer, &c. &c. taken from what well employs men in some way, or so as to give them the means of adding to revenue, or saving money, or capital—if imposed on the landowner or monied man: taken from what goes to reproduce itself, and increase the quantity of food—if imposed upon the farmer: merchants, and manufacturers, and all other people's capital, is more or less injured by its operation, and consequently

the whole capital of the country. The more it affects the land, the more is it baneful to the labourer, because it adds to the price of food, to the amount of assessment, and subtracts from the capital employed in raising food in the same ratio. Is not the pension, the navy, the army list, a sufficient abstraction from capital, without the addition of the poor list? Is not the sympathy of benevolence, originating in the heart, and enjoined by Christian precept, a better, a tenderer alleviation of penury, and more likely to be a juster, and a more beneficial charity, than the grinding, degrading, mortifying means of existence scraped from the hand of a grudging overseer, and legal compulsion?

Rash and ignorant, idle or *ill-designing* is the man who asks for the greatest curse the workmen can by possibility be afflicted with; his prayer is, that the price of labour may be lowered, the price of food raised, and this too when we have, in our manufacturing districts, three times the hands our trade requires. Let us judge of such politicians by this their first measure, and hesitate in adopting their views of religion, when we find them without the common sense necessary for this world. The first cure for your distress is to engage in some other work than the loom; the second, in the eternal retirement of the old to another and a better world; the third, in the hands which may abstract themselves from your business for ever; and the fourth, will be in the wearing out of goods now in use.

But if you would prevent a recurrence of such distress, you must not bring up whole families to your business—if you would secure a foreign trade, or make your business one that can maintain you in

dull times, you must not overstock it with hands. To avoid want, you must secure, in good times of trade, what may support you in bad; and that can only happen *by restrictions on your favourite and independent business*. Your son, your nephew, your brother and relative, and your bosom friend, must be obliged to serve an apprenticeship, and that apprenticeship must be *such as your law and your government can approve*. The land must not be burdened with you who labour for the farmer of other countries; you must, like the mason and the ant, save in one season what may support you in the other; and you will be of value, and an ornament to your native land. Is the farmer to pay a tax for your support in time of distress, that you may buy* corn in France with it, and to keep up fleets and armies to drive your goods into every river, and spread them on every bay—to support your altar and throne, and be forced to cultivate your fields with a tax of 30 per cent. on his industry, while your French foe becomes rich; and, with your corn-dealer and merchantmen, inundates the market with corn, which pays no taxes here, and prepares cannon and mercenaries to invade and subjugate you? Do away with the Corn bill,† it keeps up the price of grain three parts of the year, to enrich the speculator, the brewer, and the baker, but to do little good to you—if you love your country, if you desire it to continue great, good, and free, you must prefer the farmer of Great Britain, to the peasant of France or Russia; you must support your country

* About L.10,000,000 is bought annually now, and about L.6,000,000 is spent in Poors' rates.

† See Note A.

and your fellow-subject against the states and people, who hate and who dread your liberty and your morality, now so much vilified and so falsely aspersed.

Many and well-intentioned men tell you, that the restrictions on importation are impolitic and unjust ; but the premises on which they argue are erroneous. If, say they, the soil is so unproductive, and the climate so bad, as to prevent competition with the grower of corn abroad, and we can excel them in the production of manufactured goods, it is better to give up agriculture, and invest our whole capital in trade. But, my friends, the tithe, the poor rate, and the taxes, are forgotten in their otherwise just and true reasoning ; and the introduction of these three links must, of necessity, require the opening up of the chain, and break the line of their induction. Let us, then, rivet the fastening anew on a French vessel, and say to the owner, " On every £100 worth of your cargo, £30 is to be laid, or otherwise, you cannot unload ;" and hear what he says, before we decide whether the competition is impracticable or not. I think his answer would be sufficient (if I am any judge of French and British farming) to prove, that we could drive the peasant from the field. I will not argue more on this matter, because it would be invidious, but merely doubt, whether the weaver could be so beneficially employed in his business, with 30 per cent. imposed on it, as in *manufacture* of our ungrateful soil into alimentary productiveness.

But surely something ought to be attempted, which *would save the farmer from ruin, and the weaver from want* ; might not some duties, draw-

backs, customs, be withdrawn from manufactured goods, or the raw commodity from which they are made, to the amount of the tax on imported grains; and the farmer and the weaver be protected from the foreign grower, and British speculator in corn. Doubtless there might be, and although troublesome and difficult, it should be petitioned for, and ought to be attempted. The happiness, the prosperity of the productive labourer, let his work be what it may, is the first, and the most sacred, and the most essential duty of the state; and an object so politic, and so worthy of attention, skill, and experience, would be attainable to the knowledge, the honesty, and the benevolence of the British Parliament, and most desirable to the Sovereign of the realm.

Think, my friends, when reasoning on commerce, how uncertain is her reign, how precarious her existence! Tyre, Carthage, Greece, Rome, Venice, Genoa, have, in turns, been enriched by the wealth; enlightened by the knowledge, dignified by the freedom, she introduces or assists; but the gleam which animated them for a time, has left them poorer, darker, meaner, than it found them. Manufactories add a splendour, and a power to us, which never gilded their towers or fostered their industry; but will not our obscurity be greater, our wants more appalling, and our vices more vigorous than theirs, if the spirit of traffic betrays our State into commercial regulations, which may induce a population dependent on the sloth of other countries. When commerce decays, industry is checked; and a great, or pauper population is left on the territory, (like ours,) which has been the centre of

industry, of skill, and of capital. What is to become of industry without capital, and of course, without food? Whenever a war ensues, are you to depend on the corn of your enemies, and starve like the people of Norway, six years ago, without aid or relief? Cotton goods are luxuries, but food is a necessary: make your own selection between them, and you act as a man in want: for, as a man in want, will a French or a Russian statesman negotiate with you?

Let your great trade be for the supply of the farmer and the labourer at home. Foreign trade is a tribute to your skill, your industry, your capital, and your independence; it is beneficial to your country, while you consume its productions; and it is creditable to yourselves, while you continue honest, loyal, and virtuous. But it is temporary, and little more than speculation; and, if wise, as such you will use it. Your own prosperity is, in this country, very much in your own hands—whatever revolutionary or party language may assert to the contrary; speak and write freely on the conduct of your minister and representative; but speak truly and respectfully, and shun the society and style of those who abuse and malign, who have almost made the voice of the nation ridiculous, have given the administration a contempt and hatred of its subjects, particularly in the manufacturing districts, who have removed the controul of popular complaint* on the minister, and substituted the gripe of power on the petitioners.

Think not, by pulling down a house of worship, or insulting the ministers of religion, that you will

* See Note B.

subvert the constitution, ye profligate, and malevolent orators, who wish for rapine and licentious abandonment. The wise and salutary toleration of the state has elevated the temple of the Supreme Being, in the heart and mind of a great portion of Britons; a place from which it cannot be erased; and a residence, in which, surrounded by patriotism and virtue, its temporal energies, enlisted in the sacred cause of the constitution, whether protestant, catholic, or dissenter, can with equal courage and a higher motive, meet and crush the atheistical thief, plunderer, or murderer!!

But these men, who seem such zealous friends to the people, are the best friends to despotism, to the cause of standing armies in the time of peace, and to religious intolerance. By their voice and conduct, will the liberty of the press, and the meetings of the people, be silenced and suppressed. What will the proprietor, the monied man, the merchant, the farmer, the manufacturer do, if he finds the operative ready to destroy his property, to make him a beggar, and to murder him? He will entreat the ministry to suspend the Habeas Corpus act, to increase the army, to put the manufacturing districts under martial law, and to burn the press. Better, he will say, to pay more taxes, to be taken up on suspicion, and to be left in darkness, than to be lighted by the torch of the incendiary productions of an atrocious editor. What public man dare stand up to vindicate the cause of the good operative, or the honest press—who values his character, loves the laws, and worships the Spirit of the universe? Avoid such blasting society: warn it of its false views; return to the language of mildness and the

union of patriotism praise the government when it does its duty; be grateful to your parliament, if it promotes your happiness; thank your representative, if he acts disinterestedly; do not always blame, do not ever suspect men, because they may be higher in political distinction, or more powerful in private riches or possessions, than yourselves. The rank, the wealth, the distinctions, they enjoy, are for the *interest of all classes; and of political necessity*; they are to stimulate to activity, and turn to the use of the state, the talents, the knowledge, the industry, the bravery of all the country, and to reward those who sacrifice time, health, private affairs, and life itself, to the elevation, the integrity, the reputation, of their native land; or to stand between the king and people.

When, in our own days, we behold the mitre, the mace, the coronet, encircling the head of the peasant, the collier, and the seaman—can we deny that honours are open to all? when a cotton spinner's son had the administration of one of our kingdoms; when a common soldier had the management of the most important department of our army at Waterloo; when the master of a coal lugger commanded the fleet, which subdued the unconquered pirate; and an obscure lawyer governed this land, and guided the whole empire, while his equally humble countryman presided over the whole military establishment; is it possible that any thing desirable or attainable should be beyond the reach of the humblest individual of the land? The valour which ennobled a Seymour; the fidelity which elevated a Somerset; the achievements which immortalized a Churchill; the patriotism which sublimed a Cavendish, are tenures

on our affection, our admiration, and our gratitude, *which they cannot yet* be justly deprived of, and *we all have it in our power to attain*: and the same industry, prudence, and ability, which has made property before, can make it now. These mental qualities would remake it again, if all the land in the kingdom was divided anew, the only difference in its charter would be, that it would hold of a military despot, instead of a limited monarch.

I, who address you from the centre of your districts, may probably be held up to you as one whose property ought to be divided; whose life is a scene of ease and idleness; whose lazy existence is continued by the labour and toil of those about me—who am a drone amongst the industrious, an oppressor amongst the innocent people, (who take the hares and partridges which are the common right of all*); more, the very assassin and atheist cannot allege. I am, my friends, the successor to a property, not, indeed, gained by confinement at the shuttle, but acquired by the toil and watchings of a camp; not in the chilly air of a loom shop, but under the canopy of a snowy night; not by the light of a lamp, but by the starry torches of a frosty sky. Has the one profession less merit than the other? Has the blood of the soldier less claim of recompense than the sweat of the weaver? Has the motive of the activity of the one been less honourable than the other? Or has the one, because he has not sold his military tenure,† greater unworthiness than the other? Shall the proprietor, who has ever staked his property in the cause, and risked his life for his country, be obliged

* See Note C.

† See Note D.

to yield it to an unknown, an obscure, and untried vagabond, whose name has been only known by abuse of law and religion, and whose nature, all are totally ignorant of?

For seven hundred years this tenure has been, I believe, identified with the interests of the kingdom, and unsullied by crime, or tyranny. As early as the twelfth century my ancestors had founded a church; had executed the high and trusty office of sheriff more than once, and been hamberlain of Scotland. In subsequent generations, one had been ambassador to England, and guarantee of a royal marriage; another joint ambassador to Denmark; a third guarantee for the fidelity of a treaty with Wales; a fourth the protector of his Queen's life; a fifth, the guardian of the borders; a sixth, the cause of the translation into Scotch of the Latin Bible, and the diffusion and circulation of the Scriptures; a seventh, commissioner for the union; and an eighth, member of parliament—no proofs of ease and idleness these, or a subsistence gotten by the toil of others, without reciprocity of labour, anxiety, and fatigue, in return. I will barely add, that my family, on the female side, is from Robert Bruce; and its property the gift of the liberator of his country—and that I have been taught, at my native hearth, to love my countrymen; to devote myself to the cause of the people; to feel for the poor, to assist the needy, to serve God, and to die for my native land; and to prefer honour and freedom, to power and slavery; to uphold the constitution by sacrificing myself, either for the royal or popular rights, when they are in danger of mob, or suffering from tyranny.

Pride and vanity have no part in this narration: many men of independent property can boast far higher claims from the conduct of their ancestors, and better from their own education and intentions: but the wish to show that property has been acquired by industry, ability, and toil—that it is not always misapplied, nor its possessors ever careless of the interests of the people, has been my compulsory motive in the painful and ungracious task of writing of myself and of my ancestors.

It may be said, we do not wish the Duke of Bedford, or Hamilton, or Montrose, to be robbed and stripped, and sent to beg their bread—we only wish a better representation of the people, and the boroughs of private proprietors to be done away, that we may have more influence in the House of Commons. But who can believe it, if you mean to obtain your end by the voice of men, who preach up revolution, equality, and atheism, and by the hands of mobs who plunder, insult, and mutilate men of property, of delegated authority, and of piety? or what honest man of sense, of influence, or of property, can defend your conduct, or support your cause?

Is property to be proof of criminal intentions? And is its security to be at an end, because two-penny publishers, and orators supported by penny subscriptions, are in want of honest reputation, of means to support their profligate wishes, and of the power and dignity of the state? I hope not; but the recent meetings in our neighbourhood, give me reason to apprehend that it becomes so ere long, in the opinion of the ignorant, and the language of the bad. I much fear, that three-fourths

of the wealth, and credit, and power of the country too, already attribute such sentiments to all the manufacturing classes. What a state for a country to be in! Two hundred thousand of its best educated, and hitherto very profitable classes, hating and hated by the other fourteen hundred thousand of its fellow subjects—ready, in appearance, to join an invading enemy, and bathe, by civil revolution, or foreign mercenaries, their land, their native land of freedom, of virtue, and of unconquered independence, in the blood of its best and bravest citizens.

And for what! that creatures, with whose names I cannot pollute my pages, or associate an address to you, may take the place (of a Russel, a Howard, a Campbell, a Hay—names so often the rock on which the waves of tyranny have been broken—names so often the oak which sheltered the people from the storms of despotic violence, or perished in its effort to save and to skreen them;) and may pollute, with mean ungenerous crouching to some Bonaparte, the fields that nourished loyal and free bosoms, or, when it could no longer support, received that bold and patriot blood, which could not circulate under tyranny, in its consecrated furrows? that men should get power to repeat the actions of Marat, and Robespierre, and, like them, employ the plunder of their neighbour to keep themselves, by hired ruffians, from the vengeance of those whom, like you, they have deceived, until some ruffian more able, and less hated than they, gets the heart of his fellows, degrades or destroys them, and rears on their ruins a military despotism? For such, my friends, is the end of all violent outrageous reform;

such has been its system of operation, from the days of Greece to our time ; and no plan of revolution was ever *brought by force* into durable and effective operation, or benefited the situation of the people. The first action of its movement is, to hurry all the capital that can, by bribery or artifice be saved, out of the country ; the second is, to increase spies, legal expenses, and the army, &c. one of these throws the workmen of all classes out of employment, the other taxes and destroys them, and their complaints.

Do not give up the examination of your public men; the expression of your applause, or the utterance of your complaints ; but do so wisely, decently, and benevolently. You who have suffrages, use them honestly : you who have them not, try to get them, for every thing is open to industry in Great Britain. You who have them not, nor want them, consider yourselves the unbiassed, disinterested jury of Parliament. *If you return a fair, a humane verdict on its conduct, you will guide the press, assist the Sovereign, strengthen honest senators, improve the minister, promote peace abroad, secure tranquillity at home, vindicate the rights of all mankind, enforce your own, and establish, in the councils of the state, that spirit of virtue, that principle of justice, that soul of patriotism, which can alone stabilitate our empire, secure our reputation, or call down from above the protection of the Spirit of the universe.*

There are many abuses in the administration of the state, but the minister hates these as much as you : both the religious and legislative establishment of the country has collected rust and dirt ; but to destroy the best Constitution in the world, when

it only requires cleaning, would argue folly, not wisdom ; ignorance, not skill ; vice, not virtue.

What would any one think of a watchmaker, who, instead of cleaning the good, old, proved works of his watch, broke and threw them away ; to put in some untried, unfinished stuff of his own vain awkward composition ; or of a doctor, who, instead of using remedies for a disease, would practise some new invented physic on his body, for an experiment, or, like the French quack gout doctor, give him a doze that must either kill or cure ? Why, this is making a job of me, he would say, and give him neither watch nor person ; and, moreover, guard his friends from putting confidence in him for the future. Suspect you those state quack doctors who propose to you to pull out the wheels and chains of the constitution or to give it a new medicine : and do not prove their skill ; *but suppose it possible that they, too, may wish to make a job of you.* Remember, I, who tell you all this, have had my days of republicanism, have read of it in youth with rapture, in middle life with admiration, and yet view such a government as the best ; but, with a sigh, avow that this great empire, virtuous and wise as it is, has not patriotism nor dimensions for it. The best and happiest constitution for Great Britain, and which has ever been framed for a great state, is the one we enjoy ; and to seek for another is madness ; for although it wants dusting, regulating, it needs neither dissection nor clipping. The persons who have charge of cleaning and repairing the clock, by which our motions are guided, are men, and liable to mortal errors and failings. Blame them, expostulate with and arraign them, when they neglect to cleanse

and wind it up; but do not be unforgiving, unfeeling—indecent in your words or measures. Know, that while human guardians have a trust, their purity depends not solely on responsibility for their inattention or guilt, to sixteen millions, or sixteen hundred thousand of men. Know, that sixteen millions of men are as able to betray their country as four hundred thousand; that the poorer the voters are, the more liable are they to want, and less sensible of the loss of reputation.

Do not understand me to say, that a rich man is better or honester than a poor man. I do not think him any such thing; but I know that he should be more ashamed to do a mean action, he is more able to know its bad effects, he is more conspicuous to the observation of others, he is less in want of the means of a comfortable livelihood, than a poor man. Besides, if he does a mean action, he must give up his condition of life, or quit his country, be sneered at, despised, and called coward; or, by a duel, risk his life for his fame. If a poor man sells his vote, what happens? probably nothing; but, if it is found out, why he is fined; if he is fined, the man who got his vote will support him; and, after all, he will be no less associated with by his neighbours, or more called a rogue, than before. But you think the rotten boroughs a very bad thing, and should be done away with; and every one who has one, sells his country, in your opinion, and every one who represents one must be a bad member. Now, without disputing all this, let me inform you, that all the leading men who have such political possessions, keep them entirely for men who think with them, in public matters, and that all who like to be totally free from the particular private

feelings of ribbon-makers at Coventry of revolutionists at Westminster; of clothing interests in Yorkshire or of cotton trade interests in Lancashire get elected for a rotten borough by money. Now, we want only honest and sensible men—not theoretic beauty and purity; and, free and unbiassed voting.

Does a nobleman, who has £100,000 a-year, profit by increasing taxes and despotism? does he want money so much as four hundred voters, all in indifferent circumstances, and many uneducated and in want? Does a man, who must not support silk, or cotton, or woollen monopolies, seem less fitted to act a free unbiassed part in the House of Commons, and to pursue a national interest duly, than a member who represents a populous, but selfish town or county? Is it better that one boroughmonger should be left unbought, than one thousand men be bribed: or, that every member should run the risk of his life, in opposing the mob of Westminster, or be obliged to vote against the whole country to get a job for his constituents? If a boroughmonger can be proved to sell his seat, it *should be taken from him, and he disgraced*; if voters are guilty of corruption, their political rights should be at an end, and the qualification to return a member to Parliament, which the boroughmonger or the voters enjoyed, should be transferred to another city. That city should be the one which pays the greatest taxation, and the people who in it should hold the suffrages, those who contribute most to the public burdens, and who have most to lose by treason or invasion. No man of bad character, public or private, and no atheist, or creature that does not in some way support a religious es-

tablishment,* whether rich or poor, high or low should have a suffrage; because a man of bad character will be quite indifferent to the worth or good conduct of his member; and an atheist must be hostile to all worship of God, must be indifferent to the sanctity of an oath, and will only vote upon caprice.

When every moral and benevolent object is assisted and strengthened, if not created, by the light of Christianity and the precepts of the Old Testament, any man must be better for them. The perfection of social, is the motive of national union: and every thing tending to produce effects on the mind which can approximate to that perfection, is a legislative duty—therefore religion must by law be maintained. This country is under a religious constitution, modelled on the Mosaic laws; consequently connected with scriptural, moral, and religious doctrines. If so connected, any separation from God is unconstitutional, and any man who is a materialist, unfit to be entrusted with the maintenance and direction of the laws emanating from our divine constitution. *No man can wish to make effective what he disapproves of, and a man who does not zealously discharge the whole energy of the constitution, in all its purity is unfit to be entrusted with it.* How much more cautious should we be, in consigning our rights and wishes to any one who wishes them ill, and how much more unwilling should we be, to elevate men who abjure the protection of the Spirit of the universe. A stand to toleration must be made somewhere; like charity, like compassion, it may be carried to such a length as to ruin our land, and destroy our morals.

* See Note E.

If we are to establish a charitable sympathy, which would relieve every beggar, no man will work; if we establish poor's rates, no man's work can support him; if a lie is to be forgiven, if a theft to be pardoned, or conjugal infidelity overlooked, every thing like confidence, every thing like affection, must vanish—the conduct triumph in the end, where scarcely the will was avowed in the beginning. Every man ought to be allowed to interpret Scripture for himself as he pleases. According to his honesty, not his ability, is its irradiating ray to penetrate the obscurity of the soul, and the darker chamber of his selfish mortality. But the constitutional Deity of Great Britain is the God of the Scripture, and the only one whose worship can warrant its political charges.

Plato, Socrates, Cicero, were men of greater intellectual power than the men of this day, both by nature, and the superior independence of education which they enjoyed, and yet they could not embody their conception of the Deity in so engaging a form as that in which inspired writers of the Old Testament, and the author of the New, have exhibited that Being to our clear external and internal evidential perceptions.

A religion which points out the kingdom of heaven as in ourselves; its limits, the love of God with all our power, and of our neighbour as ourselves; its sovereign, that Being in whom we live, and breathe, and have our being; its laws, justice, mercy, and truth; the means of its acquisition, a worship in spirit and in truth; the design and end of its mysteries, the regulation of those passions which, unrestrained, hurry us to the grave, over

the thorns of repentance, and through the tears of others; cannot be a severe boundary to good men, and what it may be to bad, is a matter of little import. If they emigrate, the country is rich in such a loss; for those who cannot admit the decalogue, and over whom an oath has no controul, who substitute feeling for principle, and deny us the protection of the Creator and Preserver of all mankind, are but sorry politicians, and very precarious companions: doubtful friends behind our back, and very bad intimates of our wife and family.

You may petition for political rights proportionate to taxation; ask that capital may give a stake in the country as well as land; but ask constitutionally, argue decently, and do not claim as a right what the constitution denies you. But do not imagine that Universal Suffrage will be given; the property of the whole kingdom, in land, in goods, on mortgages, on roads, canals, mines; in the eight hundred millions of national debt—is against you; and will prefer a despotism to a democracy—with personal destruction and loss of property. Before you get such power, the Westminster Universal Suffrage men must cease their brutal habits, and attempts to murder those who counteract their views on the hustings; and such leaders as now direct you, by their speeches and publications, must have gone to give an account of that life—which has been devoted to the alienation of the subject from his government—of the rulers from the people—the labourer from his employer—the young from God: to the supply of hatred; to the encouragement of rapine; to the nutriment of malignity: which has separated the people from those who would have, and could have assisted them and

has authorized the taxes, the peace soldiery, and every infraction of the constitution, which the minister has thought necessary to adopt.

The law of nature has no language but one, that is, inequality of ranks; and the law of nature is the constitution, by whose instrumentality the Deity governs this planet and its inhabitants. Were all the nobles, all the gentlemen, all the rich, all the poor, to be set into the world on an equal footing, a few years would put such ranks and classes in full vigour again. He that could save, would get from him that could not keep his property; he that was clever, would get from him that was stupid; and as soon as that happened, would require laws to secure his greater wealth. This is the certain effect of all human operations; this is the unvarying cause of civil institutions. Now, suppose some of your associates might wish a revolution, what is its object to you? Will it benefit those who bring it about, or can it only enrich a few of the Editors and Orators who mislead?

All the property in the kingdom which belongs to the wealthy, would be but a trifling sum for the numbers who effect the change; and every sixpence of ready money, raw or unwrought goods, would be hurried out of the kingdom—long before they succeeded: or if not buried in the ground, a great part of what remained would be destroyed. What was not, would go by scramble to the stoutest, and give them a very small sum. The capital which would leave the country would be very great, and with it a very few hands would emigrate. What would be the effect of this? Why the lowering of wages. If there are fifteen millions of work people supported

at one shilling and sixpence, two shillings, or any other sum, and one half of the capital out of which they gain that one shilling and sixpence is taken to France, ninepence is all that they can get for a day's work. If there is a revolution, the men who know most of the State practice, of the law practice, of the military practice, will club together—will sell all the private property, and call what it brings national domains, or the property of the republic. Who will get the key of that?—one of your two-penny Editors. Who will get the charge of it?—one of your bellowing Orators. Who the guarding of it?—one of your soldiers. They will, too, constitute the republic. These few Marats, Robespierres, not the people, will get all this, and they will, for the good of the republic, hang you, if you ask for a share. The soldier will, in the end, perhaps, hang them; but what will you gain by that? A conscription, which will make every man a soldier—a law, which will be the wishes of your General—a religion, which, like a tight uniform, might pinch you well, but would make an easy cloak for your leader.

If there was a practicable equality, which the revolution in your own time shews you is impossible; if all blockheads, spendthrifts, and idlers, could be kept rich, in spite of their hearts; and all clever, saving, industrious, men might continue no better, nor no worse, for all they could do—pray, who are to be magistrates? who are to be justices of the peace? Lord and Deputy Lieutenants, or give them any other name; who is to give you assistance when in want? who is to find work and wages for you at a loss, in the time of bad trade? When all are in want, none can give relief; when all are of one in-

terest on one side, or all of one party on another, who is to give an unbiassed, just opinion, that will save you from law-suits? If there is to be no God, what is to give an unerring judgment on your conduct hereafter, or prepare you for death, or console you, on quitting this world?

Tell these animals from London, or from Manchester, or their agents here, that the higher orders, or the people of property here, do their duty, perhaps, as well as those who come so far, and so high up, to replace them. Suspect men who promise you too much, that they may give you too little; be on your guard with men who have nothing, and want every thing; and before you give them your confidence, know that they deserve it. Richmond and Oliver may be in the most zealous, and those who associate with you, to get you to meetings, where all are to be reviled but yourselves; and you are taught that violence is to be introduced—by speeches, which make you think every man a traitor, who does not agree with you—every man a murderer, who opposes you with a sword, when riotous—and every good thing attainable to a Parliament filled with broken tradesmen, brewers, &c. Neither your orators,—I cannot utter such names,—nor your twopenny printers, can make Frenchmen buy your goods—when they do not require them; nor capital increase—without industry; nor your country be kept up—without taxes; nor your labour gain you high wages—whether hands are scarce or plenty; nor the poor laws keep you from want, without hurting the price of labour? But poor laws will make you try any change; for they give, and can

only give you enough to keep you from absolute starvation: they bring wages still lower, by turning capital to produce hands instead of wages; and that is what your twopenny revolutionists want, and the poor rate is their recruiting bounty.

A man who has money in the Saving Bank is detested by revolutionists; because when he has something to lose he will not be so much their tool. Any thing which makes a man save money, gives him an opportunity of not working at a price which does not supply him with food.

But taxation will make you mad, if you view it as the support of knaves and traitors: instead of being so, it is that of honest men—who lent to the State, to save it from slavery to France. Revolution, not reform; madness, not reason; is what these Luddites, these political religionists of Stockport, want to substitute for the rights which Scotchmen wish; for the redress of grievances; for the adoption of constitutional measures; for the more popular representation, and shorter Parliaments, which your Sovereign might soon grant, but for these animals, who mislead, deceive, corrupt—and arm the whole empire against you; who make men curse the day when a weaver or a cotton-spinner was first introduced to their country. These villains, one day a spy; one day, a murderer of Birch; another day, a Brandreth,—wish money for themselves, not prosperity for you; anarchy, not liberty.

Should any fool or knave rise in their cause, they will skreen themselves from the civil war at their expense, and betray, as often as it suits them, the soft and credulous victim of their arts. The people who are now their protectors, must abandon them to

their fate, and give their purse and sword to those who think them now too free. They will learn too late, that those who won their patrimony by their blood, will keep it by the same noble tenure; and, nought degenerated from the valour of their ancestors, show, that neither domestic traitors, nor foreign foe, can deprive them of their birth-right, but with their life. The people to whom may be prostituted the fair fame of an enlightened, a virtuous, a free nation, are not men who dare their life in any cause. They exist alone by lenity of the Whigs, in the high situation which they defile and dishonour: they can assassinate, as we have seen, and stab the reputation too; but farther, their sordid, their base, their sneaking motives, cannot carry them. Lions in tongue, they are lambs in heart; and if they could bring about a real insurrection in this intelligent, and brave, but suffering country, of industry and morality,—in the danger, you would find them as backward, as they are forward in words: for those who are without religion, centre all their hopes and happiness in mortal life.

You! you! my brave, and wise, and religious countrymen;—you, who, in a good cause, can suffer, can adhere to law and reason in all your measures; you, who have, in fifty years, attained the civilization of centuries, and proved the excellence of education, and the pure and dignified nature of vital Christianity — who have outstripped all the nations which have ever existed in the world, in the elevation of your sentiments, the extent of your information, and the wisdom and virtue of your lives;—you, are you to be fooled out of every thing worth living for, in a moment of unavoidable distress, by the

refuse of our ignorant and illiterate neighbours? God forbid ! but if, for our sins, we are to be cursed with so disgusting a degradation; if we, who are now in harmony and charity with each other, are soon to be under martial law,—do not let us be dupes and tools of a faction, whose heads and hearts are discreditable to humanity; whose ignorant and vicious habits are dishonourable, and disgraceful to Scotland; and whose thoughts, sunk by poverty of imagination below the action of virtue, approach the instinct of the brute, in the exact ratio of their unmanly actions, their atrocious diabolical language.

APPENDIX.

NOTE A.

CORN BILL.—Ten millions of corn has been imported into Great Britain for the last two years,—more, indeed, it is generally believed; and that corn has been very highly instrumental in creating the distress of this country, and augmenting its greatest national calamity, the poor laws. The effect of importing grain into a country not sufficiently peopled, and free of public burdens, would be of little consequence; but, to a country over-peopled, and loaded with taxes, tithes, poor rates, &c. it is total ruin, unless introduced with a duty greater than the amount of the burdens on the agriculturist at home. The poor's rate in England has been certainly increased, by the inattention and fraud of those entrusted with its distribution; but its unnatural and frightful amount has been enormously augmented, by transferring that occupation to foreign labourers which ought, as much as possible, to have been confined to our own. This has not been done; but we have generously said to the French peasant, 'Come friend, and partake of our poor rate, for you must be badly off since the peace; we can afford to keep unproductive labourers here to any extent, we are so rich and under-peopled.' *Is not every man to the State, an unproductive labourer, who can pay no tax directly nor indirectly; who creates no capital in it for himself or others; and who neither consumes its corn, nor clothing, nor manufactory of tools? Surely he is; and that man is the foreign peasant; for he, in no respect, benefits you more than the horse, or spade, with which his master employs him in tillage.*

NOTE B.

PUBLIC OPINION.—This temple of national prosperity is the most delicate, the most important, and the most neglected fane in most states. In Britain, it labours under one most contradictory and injurious mystery, called libel—the greatest inculpatory symbol of which is, truth. Truth, the bo-

ject of search since the foundation of the world; the most eagerly, the most boldly pursued by virtuous and honest men in all regions; in every kingdom of the mineral, the vegetable, the animal world; in the law of nature, and the will of God,—has perished, unwept and unlamented, by the sentence of a British judge. With it has fallen the staff which should support and defend the good, and crumble down and slip from the hand of slander and villany. The Romans would not allow window curtains or shutters to conceal their actions; and we are resolved, that our neighbour must shut his eyes on actions, which we force upon his view. What a retrograde must morality pursue, when “truth becomes the greatest libel!” what a comfort for the mean, the low, the cowardly villain, to be able to do what he dare not justify! what a consolation to a wicked minister of State, that his crimes cannot be denounced! Truth, like religion, is only a fetter to the bad, and its empire ought to be universal; and until its throne is replaced, the liberty of the subject must be almost as hurtful as beneficial to society, and above all, to virtuous society, like that of Scotland.

NOTE C.

GAME—cannot exist but by protection, and if all may destroy, none will protect. If shooting was to become “universal,” the farmers would lead a dreadful life, and the country gentlemen, like those of Ireland, would choose another abode. Poachers begin by a hare’s, continue by a sheep’s, and end often by a man’s, murder, because they must buy food, and will not gain wages; and when hares become scarce, they must take sheep; and when sheep are watched, they must take purses, or break open houses. *Every man should expose a poacher, because poaching is the nursery of robbers and murderers, by its nightly habits and practice.*

NOTE D.

TENURE.—Most Landowners, whether noblemen, gentlemen, or lairds, either received their property as payment

for military service, or conquered it from the natives; and in the Lowlands of Scotland, the population of the whole country, or very nearly so, is descended from the Saxon soldiery who accompanied them. The formation of Royal Burghs, offering an abode of greater security, and absolving them from the service which they were bound to give to the person of whom they held their property, insensibly attracted them to cities. In this view, must be estimated the humiliation which has ensued to the labourer; but to his own fault, not the injustice of others, must his fallen state be attributed. Had he retained his property, he had retained his rights; when he forfeited his property, he forfeited them. With property in all ages, and in all countries, have national trusts and rights, national services, and national claims, been strictly and invariably maintained; for as long as a man has something to lose by revolution or invasion, he will maintain the constitution and the country in which that property exists; and he must be of weight in its councils.

Those who have sense enough to recollect, that food is the only indispensable necessary; that land is the only place of residence for man; and that it cannot be moved from one region to another,—will readily assent to the wisdom of the allocation of political rights. *Suffrage should, to the value of his lands, be the right of every Briton; and political economy enjoins the propriety of giving encouragement to the investment of money in it.*

NOTE E.

RELIGIOUS ESTABLISHMENT.—All countries require a religious establishment when they arrive at sufficient civilization to live in society, and make the fruit of individual industry and national acquisition secure from tyranny of the powerful, and robbery of the idle; because the selfishness of human nature is so excessive, that no human law could be enacted, or probably could be kept in operation, which would deter it from crime; and its parsimony is so contracting, that, perhaps, no form of public worship could be maintained. The abuse of one can only arise from its wealth, or the ab-

sence of perfect toleration; if its regulations and duties are such as require honest and sensible men, and have no connection with politics, or any secular occupation.

NOTE F. p. 17, l. 1.

CAPITAL.—This is the fund from which wages are drawn, and on the quantity of which, national wealth depends. National wealth is the abundance of productive industry, or labour. This is regulated by the sums invested in occupations which return an interest to their proprietor; a livelihood to the labourer; and a revenue to the State. The abundance of productive labour originates in good laws, which the Government and its subjects cannot violate: because money is most abundantly placed where it is most secure; and where it is most abundant, its interest will be lowest; consequently, so much greater profit to those who trade upon it. Every increase of profit is an augmentation of capital, and consequently of wages; and all augmentation gives more consumers of food, clothing, &c. Consumers pay indirect taxes, and these become capital also—thus, the land is improved, and trade, to an incalculable degree: *by good laws, national prosperity becomes the recompense of national wisdom and honesty.*

NOTE G. p. 17, l. 12.

“FOREIGN TRADE.”—Besides that trade which skill, industry, and capital afford to a country, there is one which nature bestows. Oil, wine, medicine, cotton, silk, metals, constitute part of such peculiar trade. To endeavour to rob any country of such trade is folly and ignorance. The best trade of a country is the one in which its capital is most rapidly augmented; for, only in proportion to such increase, is its whole productive population and revenue to become valuable; *and the prosperity, not the misery, of a neighbouring country, is the best object of pacific policy.*



